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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

Wednesday, June 29, 1938

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "TIPS FOR FOOD SHOPPERS." Information from the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, United States Department of Agriculture, and the Consumers' Counsel, Agricultural Adjustment Administration.

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Once again our fortnightly news for food-shoppers has arrived from the Department of Agriculture. And from this news it looks as if a big appetite will be an asset this summer. The report on the first of the month showed that growing conditions and crop prospects were the best for this date in 9 years -- the best since June 1929. During the past 8 years droughts have damaged crops severely in various sections. But this spring rainfall has been abundant in most States. And high yields in a number of crops have offset the fewer acres planted this year compared to last. Favorable pasture conditions have caused cows to give more milk -- have pushed the milk production per cow to record levels. And hens have been laying more eggs, too. The number of eggs laid per hen has been unusually high for this time of the year.

Right now you can expect to see more vegetables in the stores and markets than last year at this time. The economists say that substantial increases over a year ago are in prospect for most vegetables. They expect that we'll have a fourth to two-thirds more lima and snap beans, carrots, beets and cucumbers at this time than we had a year ago. Slightly larger supplies of cabbage will also be shipped but fewer green peas.

The potato production in the States shipping in late June will probably be less than a year ago. Retail prices of potatoes have been lower than in 1937 but after June they may go above the relatively low level reached in the latter part of last summer.

What about fruits this season? Well, here's the report on fruit prospects this year compared to last.

First, cherries. More sweet cherries this year but decidedly fewer sour cherries. The cherry harvest in California, which is so largely sweet cherries, will reach its peak this month. But because of low prices many of these California sweet cherries may never be picked.

Second, plums -- California plums. Fewer plums this year. These will come to market mostly in June and July.

Third, apricots. A rather light crop of apricots this year. California is practically the only State shipping apricots commercially and these California crop.

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Fourth, peaches. The Georgia peach crop is up 100 percent! In 10 southern States the peach crop is up substantially, but there is a marked decrease in the California crop. As no doubt you know, California peaches are raised principally for canning and drying, while the southern States, Georgia especially, furnish most of the eating peaches. The peak movement of southern peaches comes in July, but the heaviest movement from all areas often is not until August.

Fifth, pears. A slight increase in the pear crop this year. About 70 percent of the production of pears is in California, Oregon and Washington. The season begins in July and reaches its peak in September.

Sixth, prunes. A record size crop of prunes for drying is in prospect this year. (More prunes for breakfast than last year.)

Seventh, apples. Much smaller crop of apples this year. The first apples -- those little green early apples come to market the last of June. But the movement of all varieties of apples is heaviest in October.

Finally, melons -- cantaloup and watermelon. Probably you've noticed that the markets have had more and more melons the last two weeks. As for prices, watermelons are cheapest in July while cantaloup prices are lowest in August. At present California is the major source of cantaloups while the bulk of watermelon shipments comes from Florida. The first Georgia melons reached markets in early June.

By the way, with such big supplies of fruit in prospect, you'll probably want to make some homemade jelly, or jams or preserves this season. So let me remind you of the new Farmers' Bulletin called "Homemade Jams, Jellies, and Preserves," No. 1800. This new bulletin is free from the Department of Agriculture in Washington, D. C. You can send a postal for your copy.

So much for the fruits. Now about meats, butter, and eggs.

Spring lamb and better grade beef supplies this summer most likely will be much larger than in 1937, but pork supplies may show very little change. Prices of all meat probably will be lower than last summer. Beef and pork prices usually go up during the summer but the increase this year may be relatively small. Lamb prices ordinarily hit their peak in June or July, but they may go down a little earlier this year. And you needn't worry for fear meat is going to take a big jump in price this year as it did last summer and fall.

Butter prices are down to rock bottom -- or appear to be. Prices of butter this season most likely will be the lowest since the summer of 1935. Favorable pasture conditions will probably keep butter production this year substantially above last summer. Heavy production during recent months has resulted in a large movement into cold storage. Storage butter is for use during the winter when production is low.

Finally, about eggs and poultry. Egg prices will most likely move up above their 1937 level but poultry prices probably will be lower than a year ago. Poultry prices usually go down during the rest of the year while egg prices go up through November.

More news on supplies and prices of food in a fortnight.
